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ABSTRACT

Designed to help teachers improve instruction, this handbook provides tips gathered from focus groups of teachers and students at New Jersey's Mercer County Community College, as well as from other teaching resources. The first part focuses on the contribution of faculty-student interaction to student success, listing 21 suggestions for building rapport with students and describing 4 activities for the first day of class. This part also provides 14 tips on classroom and course management related to the contents and use of course syllabi, clarifying class and college policies, and returning tests and papers promptly and reviews strategies for dealing with the following 3 types of disruptive students: those who have side conversations during class, those who sleep or do other non-related work, and/or those who seem to lack self-discipline. The second part presents pedagogical strategies, reviewing elements of Shirley Parry's feminist pedagogy and providing techniques related to the lecture method, including student journals, minute-papers, and study-buddy groups; implementing collaborative learning; the use of modified focus group techniques in class; writing exercises to improve thinking skills; and critical thinking in the classroom. The final part addresses issues related to teaching diverse groups; presents strategies for reducing prejudice in the classroom; and provides 20 general tips for teaching students with disabilities, including hearing impaired students, visually impaired students, students who use wheelchairs, and students with learning disabilities. Contains 29 references. (AJL)

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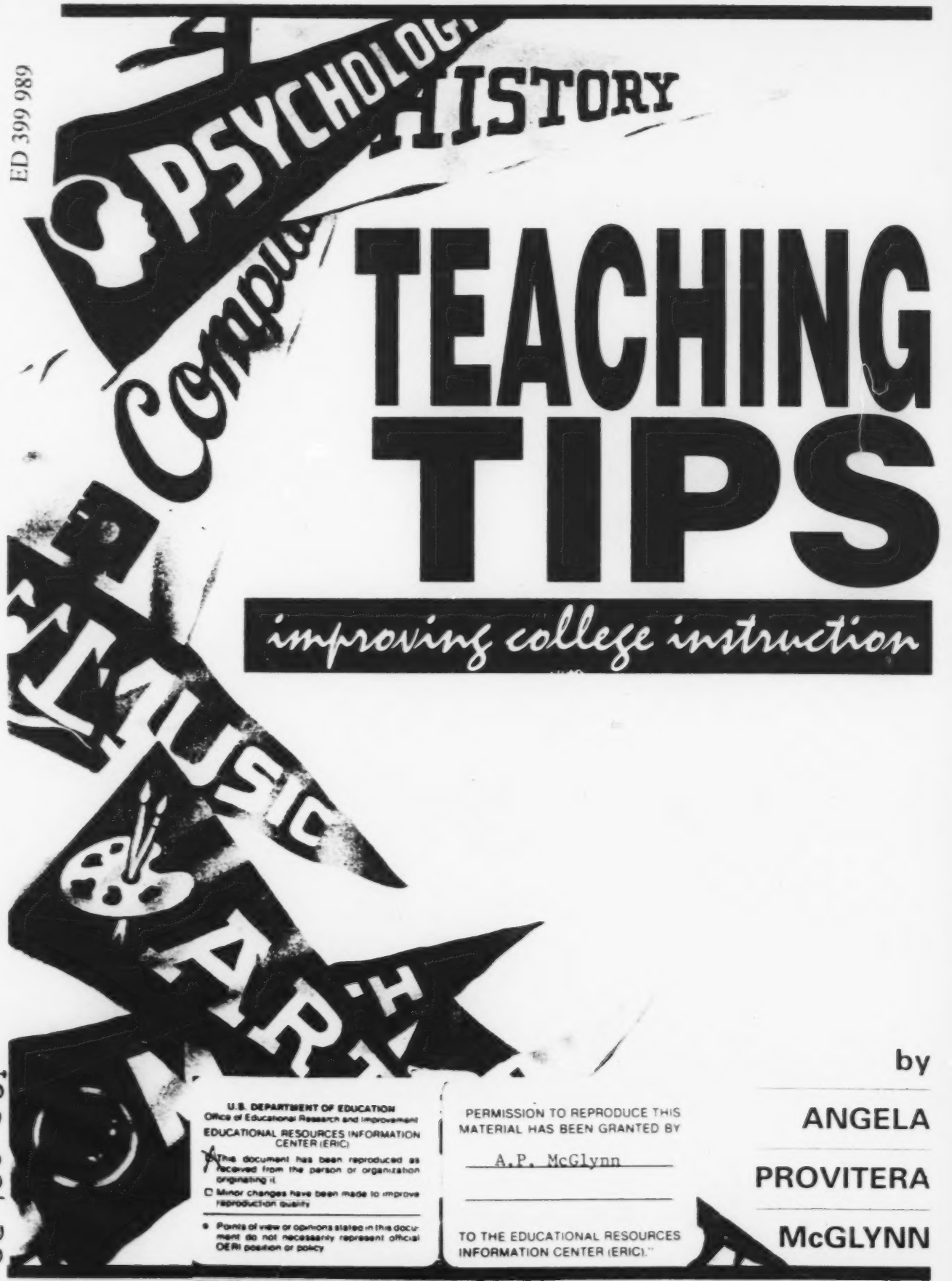

TEACHING TIPS

improving college instruction

by

ANGELA

PROVITERA

McGLYNN

JC 960 581

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TEACHING TIPS

Improving College Instruction

Angela Provitera McGlynn

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to all of our students; each one of them is someone's child. I'd like to quote from Mario Cuomo's nominating speech at the 1992 Democratic National Convention in which he addressed the plight of our children in America:

> **"...They are not my children, perhaps. Perhaps they are not your children, either. But Jesse (Jackson) is right: They are our children. And we should love them. We should, we should love them. That's compassion. But there's common sense at work here as well, because even if we were hard enough to choose not to love them, we would still need them to be sound and productive, because they are our nation's future."**

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PREFACE

A few years ago, I attended a two-day conference sponsored by The New Jersey Institute for Collegiate Teaching and Learning. The conference involved a state-wide College and University faculty-administration dialogue about ways to improve instruction in higher education. At that time, I learned how to conduct what are known as "modified focus groups." (The technique is also known as "nominal group process" and will be described in detail in the section on collaborative learning.) This is a strategy which gets participants to stay task oriented, reach consensus quickly, and to contribute ideas without having any one person dominate the group.

Using this technique with both faculty and students, I have conducted some research aimed at gathering suggestions for improving instruction. This book is an attempt at summarizing what I have learned from faculty and students' written responses and from discussions that took place during the group sessions. In addition, I have tried to pull together teaching tips from various sources of information.

I offer the teaching tips in this book not as an expert who has mastered the art of teaching, but rather as one who is on the same journey to improve instruction with my esteemed colleagues. It is my belief that teaching is an art in somewhat the same way as Erich Fromm believes that loving is an art. As such, teaching involves a great investment of one's being; it involves dedication and years and years of practice. I think the best teachers are the ones who continue to strive to be better. I wrote this book for all of us who believe this.

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FACULTY-STUDENT INTERACTION

BUILDING RAPPORT WITH STUDENTS:

Many of the retention studies show that student success in higher education is greatly dependent upon whether students develop a sense of community at their institution. Part of their sense of belonging to a particular school has to do with their relationships with the faculty. In student focus group sessions I have conducted from the late 1980's to the present, I have found that students believe that the rapport they establish with their teachers is a critical factor in their success in college.

The following suggestions relate to faculty-student interaction and classroom atmosphere. They are based on the belief that student success is more likely if students feel safe within the classroom, that is, supported, encouraged, and respected, and if they have a sense of belonging to a community. As Karel Rose eloquently stated,

> When teachers care deeply about what they do, they engage their students. When students are convinced that the course of study touches their lives, they embrace the material. But if classrooms become isolated enclaves unresponsive or distant from the culture of their students, the personal aspect disengages and the educational process is interrupted. (Rose, 1992, p. 21)

SUGGESTIONS:

1. Tell the students in the first class by what name you prefer to be called, and ask them their preference concerning their name.

2. Try to learn your students' names as quickly as possible. There are some ways to make this an easier process (as for example, the family name exercise to be discussed in the section on First Day Classroom Activities). In every student group session I have run, and in all the sources I have used, I have found that knowing the students' names is reported as a key factor in student comfort level and in creating a positive classroom atmosphere.

3. Use your students' names in positive ways in class apart from calling role. This will help you to remember their names and more importantly, it will boost their self esteem. For example, if a student makes a comment or answers a question, later in your presentation you might say, "As Jane's question suggests,..." Offer positive reinforcement whenever possible and appropriate without sounding phony or condescending.

4. In the first three classes, spend twenty minutes helping students get to know each other. Create four person groups and have each group work together on a task. For example, students can be assigned a portion of a chapter to present to the class. They could create essay test questions as a group. They could develop a project that they would then present later in the semester.

5. Listen carefully to students' questions and comments. Obviously, there are times when students will give inaccurate information or state opinions with which you strongly disagree. When you respond, the key is to respect the person making the comment even if you do not respect what they have to offer. Your tone of voice and demeanor are important in reflecting your respect for the student. You might take misinformation offered by the student and re-frame it so that you are correcting the misconception for the student and for the class without making the student "wrong." You might try adding to the student's ideas rather than dismissing them. The goal is to make students feel that their ideas, comments, and opinions are worthy of consideration. The class then gets the impression that this is a safe place where many viewpoints can be considered. If you are impatient with students' questions and see their questions as an interruption of your lecture, your students will probably feel that you really don't care about them or their ideas. If you continually defer their questions until you are finished presenting your lecture, they will probably lose interest in the answer to their question if they remember it at all. Additionally, they will probably perceive you as distant, remote, and not particularly student-oriented. I remember a Professor from my graduate school who answered a student's question with the remark, "Who cares?" No one asked a question for the rest of the semester.

6. In the first week of classes, give students your telephone extension and your office hours. Tell them where your office is and invite them to stop by. Explain to them how they can leave messages for you so that you may return their calls. In every focus group session I have conducted, students suggest that faculty members should keep their office hours. This seems to be very important to students. If they look for you when you are supposed to be there, particularly if they have an appointment, they are understandably upset if you are not there.

7. In that very first class, you need to do something that gets students to introduce themselves to each other. At the end of that first period, students should have met at least a few other people from the class. This takes some time and we may have to abandon our notion of first day introductory presentations, but the research is clear that student perseverance and success is more dependent on the relationships they establish in class than on what we have to tell them about the course. In the next section, I will offer specific suggestions for first day classroom activities.

8. Devise a way for students to exchange phone numbers for absences and missed work and assignments. You might get students paired according to where they live, their phone exchanges, or their zip codes. This is another ice breaking technique that gets students acquainted with some other people. Additionally, you can use this opportunity to talk about student responsibility for their studies.

9. Talk with students individually before or after class. This seems to create a more personable classroom atmosphere. Frequent faculty-student interaction, both in class and outside of class, seems to be

one of the most important factors in student motivation, perseverance and success.

10. Since inviting students to stop by your office doesn't usually work, have them pick up tests, papers, etc. during an office hour. This increases the chances for a personal contact outside of the classroom. You many even choose to have a conference with students throughout the term.

11. Maintain an enthusiastic attitude toward your subject. Students are extremely sensitive to their teachers' level of interest and enthusiasm. If you are not excited about your subject matter, your students will not develop a love of your discipline. If you have lost some enthusiasm over the years, find ways to recharge your batteries. Go to conferences or workshops in your field. Take on new preparations. Revise the courses you teach. You must do something for your own mental health and for your vitality in the classroom.

12. Throughout the semester, but especially in the first several classes, show your students the relevance of the subject matter you teach to their lives. Play this up to the hilt in order to influence their motivation to learn.

13. In those first classes, encourage students to work hard to achieve, without doom and gloom threats of failure. Encourage them to believe they will be able to be successful, that you want them to succeed, and that you will give them individual help or you will offer suggestions for getting help (such as tutoring or The Writing Center). It is important to have and to express high expectations for all of your students. The research on the "self-fulfilling prophecy" shows that teachers' expectations can greatly influence the motivation and the performance of their students.

14. Find opportunities to praise individuals for their work and/or their questions or comments. After a good class discussion, praise the class as a whole for their participation.

15. After the first exam, praise the students who have done well, privately or publicly. Try to speak to students who did not do well privately to see what their problem was so that you may offer suggestions for improvement on the next test.

16. Create a relaxed classroom atmosphere by respecting students, encouraging students to ask questions, and engaging the quieter students in discussion.

17. Get students to sit closer to each other and where possible, in circles. Face to face contact seems to generate more interaction among students and to enhance morale. In our large classes, circles are often impossible to arrange. A variation suggested to me by a colleague* is to have the class divide in the center and then the two halves of the class can face each other. Again, this seems to generate more student interaction than straight rows facing front since students are better able to see each other. This also moves the

focus from the front of class and gives the teacher the opportunity to walk among the students as he or she conducts the class. It is interesting to shift the focus occasionally to the back of the room where some students put themselves so as not to get involved in the class. (*This was suggested to me by Bill Engler for whom the technique works very well. When I started to use it this past year, I was pleasantly surprised to find how well it worked.)

18. Students report that they learn best when they feel that their teachers care about them as people and care that they learn the material. They say they want their teachers to be approachable.

19. One way to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere is to share with the class personal experiences where relevant, and to speak at a level that is understandable to your students.

20. Use humor in classes. Not everyone is a comedian but most of us have a sense of humor and can bring wit and humor to our classes. Students seem to greatly appreciate teachers who sometimes interject humor into their classes. I was surprised how often this was mentioned by students in focus groups over the years.

21. Wherever appropriate, introduce personal experiences into the class. Sometimes, you may illustrate a concept by a personal example. Some disciplines obviously lend themselves more to this than others. However, within any discipline, it is often possible to share experiences to make a point and to become more of a human being in the eyes of our students. Students are often interested in our experiences as students, as for example, what we thought and felt about the courses we teach when we first encountered them as students. This type of discussion is not merely chit-chat. In addition perhaps to providing students with some valuable information, we are building a relationship that seems to be crucial to the learning process.

FIRST DAY CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

The first class of the semester is the most important class of the semester! This is the class that sets the tone for the term; the first few weeks are crucial for helping students to motivate themselves to learn and to persevere.

For many of us, when we look back to our college days, the first day of class was the day we were most intimidated. The Instructor gave us the course syllabus, told us what was expected of us, warned us of the difficulty of the course, and in many cases, encouraged us to withdraw from the course if we had any doubts about our level of commitment. Did this approach help us or hurt us? Did it motivate us to learn? Whether this approach had value or not is a moot question. The fact is that this approach is no longer viable and no longer works!

What seems more effective is to create a safe atmosphere that first day of class where students feel welcomed to our classes and where they feel that people care who they are. In that very first class students need to connect to the teacher and to their classmates. They need to leave that first class feeling enthused about coming back to the next class. They need to believe that if they do not come back, they will be missed.

1. FAMILY NAME EXERCISE

In order to get students to know each member of the class a little better, to facilitate memory for names for students and for the Instructor, and to create a sense of community in the very first class, the family name exercise could be used.

Directions: The Instructor can get the ball rolling by being the first to share. All students share the story of their name. They introduce themselves by telling their first and last names, giving a brief history about how they were named, who they were named after, how they feel about their names, nicknames they have, or have had in the past, and whether they liked the nickname, and any other interesting information relating to their names. After everyone has shared, the Instructor can repeat everyone's name or ask for volunteers from the class to do so.

2. STUDENT DISCLOSURE EXERCISES

In order to encourage student interaction, Instructors may try some variation of these exercises.

Directions: Pass out a 3 X 5 index card to each student. Have students write their names on one side of the card, and on the other side, write something about themselves that they would not mind others in the class know. Students can then circulate, introducing themselves to each other and sharing what they have written about themselves. The Instructor can participate in the circulation around the room and can then collect the index cards. The Instructor can then read the backs of the cards and either ask students to introduce

themselves to the class as their cards are read, or can ask students who met the person whose card is read to introduce that student to the class.

Dyadic Interviews are conducted in order for students to get to know each other well enough to introduce each other to the class.

Directions: Ask students to jot down three questions they wouldn't mind someone asking them about themselves. Explain that the questions can be at any level of self disclosure they choose, and that their responses may become public information for the class, so they should not reveal any information about themselves that they want to be private. The Instructor may let students select their own partners, in which case they usually pair up with students sitting next to them, or the Instructor may pair up students in what appears to be a random fashion but which reflects pairs of diverse students (race, ethnicity, gender, age). Students are then instructed to switch papers with their partners so that students have their partner's questions to ask them. Students can then conduct a short interview and jot down their partner's responses on their sheets. Students are reminded to get their partner's full name and correct pronunciation. The Instructor serves as time keeper. If there are an uneven number of students, the instructor might participate or ask one dyad to work as a triad. After a few minutes, the Instructor interrupts so that interviewers and interviewees can switch roles. After students have had the opportunity to interview and be interviewed, the Instructor reconvenes the large group, and asks each student to introduce his or her partner to the class. Students introduce their partners by full name and share with the class any information they have learned from the interview.

Informal Sharing exercises involve students pairing up, introducing themselves, and sharing any information about themselves they choose that is not obvious to others. This can be used as a warm up for students to introduce themselves to the class, or Instructors may ask people to introduce their partners to the class.

Walk Around the Room exercises can take many forms. Students may simply walk around the room and meet as many other people as possible within some limited time frame. You can have them merely share their names or you can create a theme that they can share in addition to their names. This could be dependent on the course you are teaching. For example, in a social psychology course where one of the topics covered is friendship formation, I sometimes have students share their names and the qualities they most value in a close friendship. In a math course, you might ask them to share their names and their first experience with math in grade school. Select something straightforward so that all students will have something to share.

Introductions and Repetition: Students volunteer at random to introduce themselves and share something about themselves that might help us remember them. It usually works better to have students volunteer at random rather than to go around the room in

seating order because students may "wait their turn" with anxiety and tune out other students' names and stories. Students are encouraged to listen carefully to people's names and are told that at the end of the exercise they will have to name three people. After all students have introduced themselves, each student then introduces three students to the class, stating the student's name and what the student had revealed about himself or herself. Students can choose three people who are sitting close by or in other parts of the classroom. The repetition helps everyone to remember most of their classmate's names.

3. **INSTRUCTOR DISCLOSURE BEGINNINGS**

In order to get students to feel that the Instructor is a human being, Instructors might share some things about themselves. Instructors might share the story of their interest in their discipline or the particular course being taught. They might tell the class some details about when they studied the same course, what they expected, what they worried about, how they studied, any great wisdom they gained, or any other anecdotal information students might find interesting and maybe even helpful in some way.

4. **ACTIVITIES ABOUT COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

Directions: Write the name of the course on the blackboard. Ask students to write three expectations they have about the course. Have students work in groups to reach consensus about their expectations. Have group reporters report to the entire class. Students and Instructor can then discuss expectations for the course.

Directions: Hand out 3 X 5 index cards and ask students to write down any questions they have pertaining to the course they are about to take. You can collect the cards and read the questions aloud commenting on the questions in terms of when and how the course might address them.

CLASSROOM AND COURSE MANAGEMENT

1. In the first or second class, give your students the course syllabus. This should contain your name and the name of the textbook(s), the course assignments, a description of the exams with exam dates if possible, a description of all other assignments with as much detail as is possible, your attendance policy, your office number and office hours, your telephone extension, your policy concerning missed or late exams and late papers submitted, your asterisk grade policy, the college policy on auditing a course, the college policy on academic integrity, and your grading policies. In addition to having this written document, explain in class the student's responsibilities.

2. When you distribute your course syllabus, discuss the relevance of the course to your students' lives and give them a pep talk about success in your class. Discuss your expectations about their performance and what will be required of them to do well. Talk about your role in their learning and your hopes for their success. You may want to discuss study habits and strategies for success in your course. One of my colleagues* offered a suggestion that a few of us have tried that seems to work very well. Read to students the comments and tips of the previous semester's students about how to do well in your course. Students often seem more impressed by other students' wisdom than by the wisdom of the Instructor. (*This was first suggested by Judy Nygard).

3. In addition to including your attendance policy in your course syllabus, talk about your policy when you distribute your syllabus. I am aware of the arguments against formulating attendance policies. Some of my colleagues believe that it is the student's responsibility to attend class. The belief is that our students are adults and are paying tuition so they have the right to make their own decisions about class attendance. Although I understand and can agree with this position philosophically, my experience has led me to create and emphasize an attendance policy. I have found that students are more inclined to attend class if I take roll in every class and if there are some cost/reward consequences tied to their attendance. In my syllabus, the wording of my attendance policy includes the phrase "<u>may</u> result" so that I am not bound to penalize a student. I like to keep my options open for students who have special circumstances. When I tell students my attendance policy, I provide a rationale for it. I tell them that one of the key factors in student success in college is class attendance. I also tell them that what happens in class is unique and is not easily replaced by copying someone's notes or reading the textbook. Although some students complain about the policy, the great majority of my students tell me informally, in focus groups, or on course evaluations that the policy was an additional incentive that motivated them to get to class. An occasional reminder of the policy during the semester is helpful. I strongly believe that class attendance promotes success and that an attendance policy gets students to believe that we care whether they come to class or not.

4. Have students fill out index cards with their names, courses they have taken in your discipline, and phone numbers and hours when they could be reached. You could say that you might want to reach them at some point during the semester; most students don't feel intruded upon by this request. Instead, they feel cared about.

5. Explain the College policy concerning notification of class cancelation in the event of snow or your illness.

6. At the beginning of each class, have a student summarize the main points of the last class, and then announce the topics to be covered and your objectives for the day.

7. Meet all of your scheduled classes. If your schedule permits, arrive to class before the students and stay beyond the class time in case students want to talk to you. Begin and end classes on time. Chatting before and after classes with students builds rapport as well as enhances your effectiveness as manager of the learning environment.

8. Create the first test of the course to cover a smaller amount of material than later tests. Often, students are just getting their feet wet and attempting to learn the language of your discipline in the first few weeks. Their first test experience should boost their confidence and motivate them to persevere.

9. Explain your philosophy and purpose in testing. Create exams that cover the most important topics covered in the text and in your classes. Find a balance on frequency of testing so that a reasonable amount of material is covered on each test.

10. Explain what the test will cover in advance and how the test will be graded. Remind students of your grading policies occasionally during the semester when helping them to prepare for an exam or paper, or when you are returning exams/papers to them. Review material before exams and follow up after tests.

11. Return tests and papers to students as soon as possible. Learning theorists tell us that the closer the feedback one gets to the learning experience (the test), the greater the reinforcement of the learned material.

12. Offer constructive written feedback on exams and papers so students will know how they can improve their work.

13. As manager of the class, we may sometimes feel that we should know all the answers. Many of us become masters of answering questions even when we are on shaky ground. Learn to feel comfortable admitting that you don't know all the answers - this actually gives you greater credibility in students' eyes. Tell students that you will research the answer to their questions and then follow up.

14. Attend to factors relevant to the classroom such as room temperature and air ventilation.

DEALING WITH DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

There are some students whose behavior is not appropriate for the classroom. Conversations with faculty over the years support my view that we all deal with disruptive behavior from time to time. The most common complaint is students talking in class in side conversations. It seems that the larger the class, the more likely this is to happen. I have had the most difficulty with side conversations in the large lecture I teach with 220 students. I have some suggestions for those of us who teach large lectures to be discussed separately below since I believe an Instructor may handle these large lecture situations differently from the smaller classroom.

<u>For students who have side conversations during classroom meetings, here are some suggestions:</u>

1. It is important to discuss your expectations about classroom behavior early in the course. This may not have been necessary when we were students, but seems to be good practice these days. I often tell students that I hope we have good discussions in this class and that a guideline that may facilitate good discussion is that one person should speak at a time. If students then talk while I am speaking or a classmate has the floor, I say, "Please remember, one person should speak at a time."

2. For many students who talk to the person next to them, simply looking at them, direct eye contact, stops their talking. Sometimes, walking towards them and looking at them stops their talking. I have had some students who seem not to be able to stop themselves from talking in class even when I look at them. With students I feel comfortable with, I have put my hand on their shoulder while I continue to discuss the material. This stopped their conversation abruptly. However, it is necessary that you have established rapport with the student before trying this strategy because students may otherwise feel intimidated and then you may have lost them.

3. You may also try directing a question to someone close to the talking person. If you ask the student who is talking to answer a question, not only may you turn that student off to you and to the class, you may turn other students off as well. The classroom atmosphere should feel safe. Asking a student a question when you know he or she is not paying attention is perceived as a threat. Asking a nearby student to answer a question focuses the class attention to the part of the room where the disruption is and may get the disrupters to stop talking.

4. If the in-class strategies do not work, talk to the disrupters privately before or after a class meeting. You can catch them on their way out of the room, for example, and say, "May I speak with you for a minute?" You can then explain how their talking during class is distracting to you and to the other students. You can ask them to hold their conversations outside of class. For students who seem not to be able to stop talking to their friend, you can ask them to take seats far enough away from each other so they are not tempted for

the rest of the term. You can say this light heartedly and maybe with humor so as not to alienate them. Students are generally much more cooperative if they feel you understand their behavior but cannot condone it. If you take a hard line attitude with them, you may get them to stop talking in your class but you may also get them to stop attending class or paying attention when they do show up.

5. A variation of casually asking students who are on their way in or out of class to speak with them is to call their names during the class (when they are talking) and tell them you would like to speak to them after class. This generally stops their talking for the rest of the hour. There are pros and cons of this strategy. Everyone in the class now knows these students will be reprimanded in some way. You have not actually reprimanded them in front of the class but by calling their names, you have called attention to their misbehavior. The advantage of this is that the entire class will probably be quiet for the class hour. The disadvantage is that you may have also stifled some appropriate class interaction by playing the "authority" role. The students you asked to speak with you may feel embarrassed, threatened, and even hostile towards you. This may be a necessary strategy in some circumstances despite its shortcomings. However, alternative strategies should be considered since the ideal is to win the person, not the point.

<u>For students who do not pay attention in class by sleeping or doing other work clearly not related to the class you are teaching</u>:

Many of us ignore this kind of behavior because it lowers our self-esteem and we don't know how to do deal with it.

Whenever I have had a student fall asleep in a class, I have invariably felt somehow responsible for the student's behavior. I have often felt that I put the student to sleep by creating such a boring class. I have felt embarrassed that other students noticed the sleeper and that I did not respond to the sleeper in class.

When I have spoken to the student after class, what I discovered was that here was a student who was carrying an incredible work load, many times coming to class straight from working a shift without any sleep. Talking to students about their schedules and their commitments, sometimes their over-commitments, can often be helpful to them. They may be able to figure out ways not to come to class so exhausted. A couple of times, I discovered that a sleeping student was on medication for some serious physical problem. I mention these examples because we are often prone to suspect the worst - of the student and of our own teaching. If we understand the reasons for a student falling asleep in class, I think we can deal with it more effectively. It certainly helps not to personalize their behavior.

Students who do other course work in our classes are a different matter. Clearly, they are disengaged from our class. We need to stop this behavior because it is not in the student's best interest to "miss" our class and, for most of us, it is annoying and ego deflating.

There are several ways to deal with the student who does some unrelated work in our classes (or who reads the newspaper!). You can try direct eye contact, moving in the student's direction, asking a neighboring student to answer a question, asking the not-paying attention student to answer a question, breaking the class into groups or dyads and requiring the completion of some task, or speaking to the student after class. The key is to do something. It is easier to ignore the behavior but we do a disservice to the student and to the class by doing so.

For students who seem to lack self-discipline:

Many of us have discussed with each other at Master Faculty meetings, at lunch, and in focus groups, the fact that students often behave in ways that seem irresponsible to us. Some come late to class repeatedly. Others never turn work in on time. Some students even walk in and out of our classes to get a drink of water.

I have had some students for whom none of the following suggestions worked. However, here are some ideas that may be successful:

Be clear about what your policies are concerning latecomers to class, late submissions of papers, and missed exams. In your course syllabus and in class, tell the students the consequences of such behavior and stick to the policies. Be a role model for responsible behavior by starting and stopping class on time, and by meeting your own deadlines in terms of grading exams and papers.

Large Lecture Disruptions:

Side conversations are much more common in large lecture situations than in classrooms. Social psychologists tell us that when people are in large groups, they often feel "deindivuated." This means they feel anonymous in a large group; they lose a sense of self. Research shows that when people feel deindivuated, they are often capable of behaving in ways they would not ordinarily act. I have found that students who would never talk in a small group feel much freer to talk during large lecture. Usually, the talkers sit in the back rows of the lecture hall. I have discovered that the best way to stop disruptive behavior in large lecture is to try to break down students' sense of deindividuation. I should mention that I have not been as successful as I would like. I still have to deal with talkers every semester, but I do find that I am able to stop the talking patterns earlier in the term and I feel as if I am in more control of the class than when I first started teaching large lectures.

In order to mitigate students' feelings of anonymity in large lecture, I do a number of things. In the first class, I explain the attendance policy (which has become more structured over the years). I ask them to come to class early the next class period so they can select the seat of their choice which they will keep for the semester. I tell them that most people automatically sit in the same area anyway since we are such creatures of habit. I also tell them that some research suggests that students tend to do better if they sit close to the front of the room because they tend to stay more involved. I tell them that if they have a strong preference for an aisle seat, they should come early to class the next session so that they will be assured of one. (I

mention this because I have had several students, more in very recent years, who suffer from panic anxiety disorder and they want to feel that they can leave the room quickly if they have to.) I tell them that first day that I will try to learn all their names very quickly.

In the next class session, I have students select their permanent seats (using a straightforward, fast technique devised by my colleague, George Colnaghi). For the first couple of weeks in large lecture, I sometimes use a student's name by surreptitiously referring to some sheets in front of me where I have students' names and row and seat numbers. I also meet the large lecture students once a week in twenty person seminar classes where I use strategies to memorize their names. Soon, I know enough names to create a large lecture atmosphere where students feel that I know whether they are there or not and who they are. Whenever possible, I use a student's name to answer a question, address a comment, or sometimes, in an example I have created to illustrate a point.

In the first lectures of the term, I tell students that considering the size of the class, it is very important to me that students pay attention and do not engage in side conversations. I tell them that it is understandable in a class this size that they will get tempted to talk to their friends in the next seat but this behavior cannot be tolerated. I share with them that I find side conversations extremely distracting and that students have complained to me over the years that they too are very distracted by people who talk in class. I say that students are paying tuition to hear these lectures and that it is part of my role to protect their rights to hear them.

I have found that large lecture classroom atmosphere has to be somewhat different from that of smaller classroom sections. I play much more of an authority role in the large lecture. I tell students that if they talk I will call them by name. If I have to call them by name a second time, I will ask them to leave the lecture hall. I warn them that I may ask persistent talkers to withdraw from the course. I balance this hard line position which puts many students off by building rapport in the seminar classes.

Unfortunately, some disruptive behavior in large lecture classes is almost inevitable unless you are teaching special homogeneous groups of highly motivated students. Part of the problem with the Introductory Psychology Large Lecture is that most students take this class in their freshman year before they have been socialized as a college student. In my experience, students mature as people and as students in their first college year. By their second year, their behavior is much less immature.

There are some techniques I use in large lecture to keep students engaged. Obviously, one way to keep disruptive behavior to a minimum is to make the class interesting. I have an edge in that most students elect to take this course and are interested in the subject matter. There are some suggestions, related to eliminating disruptive behavior in large lecture, that can be found in the section dealing with pedagogy since they are appropriate for the lecture mode in general even in smaller classes.

PEDAGOGY

INTRODUCTION

Shirley Parry (1990) wrote an article summarizing the work of several faculty members from Maryland Community College and Towson State University who were engaged in a FIPSE project (Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education) involving curriculum transformation. She titled her article, "Feminist Pedagogy." When I presented her ideas to the Humanities faculty in a brown bag session, some people suggested that the classroom strategies and techniques she presented would be more appropriately called "humanistic." Whatever label we choose, I thought her summary of the project members' work has merit and would like to include here some of their suggested ideas about pedagogy.

Project participants questioned the relationship between students and course material in the traditional view of education. Since they find the traditional view of the student as the recipient of the instructor's information to be limiting, they suggest a more interactive relationship between students and the course material. The strategies they suggest place more emphasis on the students' abilities to think critically.

Another area participants reexamined was the relationship between students and faculty. Some of the classroom techniques developed were geared towards helping students gain mastery of the material on their own so that they would feel empowered. In this sense, faculty would share authority and power with students.

A third concern of what Parry calls "feminist pedagogy" was to find ways to shift the emphasis from the traditional competitive and individualistic classroom atmosphere towards one of sharing and cooperation. Faculty participants developed strategies to promote group work and collaborative exercises so that students could learn from each other.

Another aspect of their work emphasized the notion that the classroom should be a place where different points of view are recognized. The research related to curriculum transformation challenges the notion that a single viewpoint is the "truth." Students themselves bring different "contexts" and different experiences to the classroom. The new thinking suggests that how one experiences and interprets his or her world is powerfully influenced by one's gender, race, class, and ethnicity. Faculty participants in the FIPSE project suggested strategies to encourage the identification of multiple points of view on issues. They also developed techniques designed to involve marginalized students more fully in the classroom so that they could discover and value their own voices.

The following suggestions are primarily from Parry's (1990) article summarizing the work of the FIPSE project participants, the Mercer Humanities faculty brainstorming session (brown bag, Fall, 1991), the faculty and student modified focus group sessions held on Mercer's campus from 1989 - 1992, and Horvath's research (1980):

MODES OF PRESENTATION AND SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES

THE LARGE LECTURE AND THE LECTURE MODE:

1. Discuss in the first few classes how the subject matter relates to students' lives. Make the first few lectures particularly engaging by showing how learning the material of your course may be beneficial to them.

2. Learn your students' names as quickly as possible and use them in lecture frequently. Even if you only know ten names in a class as large as two hundred in the second class, if you are able to use those names in some way during the lecture, students will have the impression that you are getting to know the class.

3. A fifty minute hour is too long for most people to stay tuned in. Be creative during the lecture by devising ways to engage students:

    a. Periodically, ask a non-threatening question that requires a show of hands. For example, in large lecture, when I discuss Pavlov's classical conditioning experiments with dogs, I ask students for a show of hands of people who have dogs and cats as pets. I then ask them if their pets know when they are going to be fed. Not only are students better able to learn and recall that classical conditioning involves learning by association, they are more involved in the class by their participation and by their interest in who else has a dog or cat. This is certainly not a high level of participation and yet it helps students to stay awake and with the class.

    b. After twenty minutes of lecturing, ask students to take a minute to write a summary of the main points of the lecture thus far. After twenty or thirty minutes, change the pace of the lecture. Asking students questions gets students more involved in the lecture, gets them to think, and gives them an opportunity to express themselves.

    c. Ask for a show of hands whenever you lecture on a topic that may be debatable. For example, "How many people believe that...?" This works very well for Phil Donohue - it is an effective way to keep people engaged!

    d. To add variety to the lecture mode, use visual aids such as the chalk board, overhead transparencies, films, slides, charts, tables, hand-outs. If you use visual aids, make them clear and readable. If your overhead transparency has several points on it, cover all but the part you are speaking about or students will try to write it all down and will not be listening to what you are saying.

    e. Organize your lectures with numerous illustrations of concepts, relate material to students' lives, and deliver your lectures with enthusiasm and humor.

Remember that although lecturing is the most efficient way to transmit information, it is usually not the most effective way for students to learn and retain information. The more students are active learners, that is, the more they are involved in the process, the more they will learn and the more they will remember.

The lecture mode is considered an instructor-centered mode of teaching. Interspersing student-centered modes of instruction can break up long lecture sessions and help students better retain the information. Examples of student-centered modes of instruction include class discussion, panel discussions, oral reports, debates, individual or group projects, collaborative learning techniques, hands on sessions, role playing, and field trips.

TECHNIQUES APPLICABLE TO THE LECTURE MODE OR OTHER CLASSROOM MODES OF PRESENTATION:

1. Very early in the semester, hand out and discuss the booklet, "Succeeding at Mercer: A Brief Guide to Effective Study Skills," developed by the Division of Academic Affairs, 1991. Read through the book and emphasize the most important parts for the course you teach.

2. Students can share in course work selection to a certain extent. For example, students may select readings for the course and term paper subjects. Students may develop essay questions and then work in groups to select essays for submittal. Questions selected for the exam could earn bonus points for the group on that test.

3. To enhance student involvement and participation, you can move away from the front of the classroom. This shifts attention and may get participation from the people who generally sit in the back of the room.

4. To help students benefit from course work, give prompt feedback on their performance on exams and papers. Frequent suggestions for improvement, and praise for what they have accomplished can be helpful to your students.

5. THE MINUTE PAPER: In the last five minutes of class, ask students to respond to particular questions. The FIPSE project participants used the following two questions: "What is the most important thing you learned today?" and "What do you still have questions about?" The paper is ungraded. These questions proved useful as a tool in assessing the effectiveness of particular classes or units of classes. One professor in the FIPSE project assigned a minute paper after a second exam asking students what they did to improve their score so that he could share it with other students. Students seem more impressed with their peer's suggestions than with their instructor's words of wisdom, and this facilitates a more cooperative student-student relationship.

6. JOURNALS: Journals can be used in a variety of ways across diverse disciplines. Asking students to keep journals helps them to stay

focused on the material, to develop new ideas and do some independent thinking, and to discover and articulate their own experience and their own points of view.

7. THINK-PAIR-SHARE: Students are asked to think and write about an issue privately for a few minutes. They are then asked to pair off and discuss their ideas with their partner. The large group then reconvenes, and pairs of students share their ideas with the entire class. This can enhance a student's involvement with the material and with the class. The collaborative method also helps to build rapport among class members.

8. ROLE-PLAYING: Role-plays can be used in a variety of contexts and disciplines. Some of the many possibilities include the reenactment of trials with a defense and prosecution (criminal justice courses), the use of the combination of case study and role-playing in which students are given some information (for example, on homelessness in a political science or sociology course) and then play various roles, or taking on the roles of therapist and patient in an abnormal psychology course.

9. PEER-CRITIQUING: Whenever a homework essay is due, divide the class into groups of three. Explain the meaning of peer critiquing and ask the students to act alternately as reader/writers and "critiquers" in the following way:

   a. read their paper aloud twice
   b. during the first reading, critiquers only listen
   c. during the second reading, they make written comments according to the following format:

      1. I liked _____ about your paper because ___
      2. I would like to hear more about _____
      3. I need clarification on _____

   d. the signed comments are then handed to each writer/reader
   e. the writer revises (or does not revise) at home - based on the comments
   f. in the next class, the paper is handed in as a packet containing the original draft on the bottom, the signed comments in the middle and the revised draft on top (all stapled together)

10. FISH BOWL: Different groups of students sit in concentric circles. Each student in the inner circle speaks for a limited time span. This is followed by questions and comments of members from the same group. Next, students from other circles may join in.

11. SCAVENGER HUNTS: Students can become engaged with course material and cooperate with other students on scavenger hunts. This works well in courses where students can gather information related to the course in teams to build a sense of community.

12. STUDY-BUDDY GROUPS: Have students form four person study groups that they will automatically move into prior to the start of

each class. Create some ongoing assignment for them to be working on that they can discuss together for a few minutes before you begin class. I tried this in a "psychology of relationships" course and it worked extremely well. I asked students to make journal entries prior to each class pertaining to the reading assignments and to discuss what they had written with their study buddies during the first five minutes of class. I found that when I started the class, the students' willingness to participate was much higher than usual and the discussion was much richer.

13. WRITE/SHARE IN A PAIR/DISCUSS: To facilitate a meaningful discussion of material, have students write privately for a few minutes. Then they can share their writing with one other person which is less threatening than presenting to the class. Next, they can either read what they wrote to the class or speak without reading what they have written. Whatever variation you try, having students first think and write privately and then share with one other person usually enhances the quality of the discussion that takes place.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

According to Judy Nygard (1991), collaborative learning is much more than simply using groups in class. Collaborative learning covers a variety of techniques such as peer projects and small group work. However, regardless of technique employed, collaborative learning refers to a kind of group work that shares several elements in common.

Kenneth Bruffee (1984) says that collaborative learning involves the teacher who sets the problem (defines the task) and then organizes the students to work it out collectively. The teacher is no longer perceived as the sole transmitter of information. Students are no longer passive recipients of the teacher's knowledge, and knowledge is no longer seen as a mass of selected information we used to call reality or the "truth." According to Wiener (1986), knowledge depends upon social relations and intellectual negotiations. Collaborative learning thus requires that groups work on tasks that have more than one answer or solution, and that require or benefit from multiple perspectives. The task in some way requires collective judgment.

Another common element of collaborative learning is that students are instructed to reach consensus as a group. Students are encouraged by this to work cooperatively rather than competitively. Listening to divergent views has a powerful effect on student learning. Students begin to understand how perspective and bias play a role in everybody's thinking, including the "experts." When consensus works effectively, students do some genuine intellectual negotiation in which they share and revise their thinking. Wiener says that the group's effort to reach consensus by their own authority is the major factor that distinguishes collaborative learning from simply having students work in groups.

Wiener says that whether collaborative learning is successful or not will depend primarily upon the quality of the initial task students are asked to perform in groups. The Instructor's initial charge in attempting to use the collaborative learning model is to construct (and put in writing) the task or problem the students will tackle. In creating the task, the Instructor must focus on several factors: Is the task relevant to the course objectives? What should the task accomplish? What should students learn from working on the task? How much time will the task take to complete? What are the milestones of the task? Does it require collaborative judgment? Do students have the necessary information to complete the task? Do students have the ability and the time to complete the task?

After creating the task, the Instructor's role becomes one of classroom manager. The Instructor sets up the groups, announcing that each group should decide who will be the group recorder/reporter. Instructors may also appoint group recorders/reporters. The role of the recorder/reporter should be made clear by the Instructor. Recorder/reporters will keep notes on the group's decisions and then report back to the large group when the group reconvenes. The Instructor may use a variety of techniques in setting up the groups depending on a whole host of factors. If the Instructor wants to enhance respect for cultural diversity, groups may be set up to be culturally heterogeneous. The Instructor may generate groups based on gender,

based on academic performance, based on diversity of age, based on students' interests, and so forth.

Another distinguishing feature of collaborative learning is that the Instructor does not circulate among the groups. Many of us have moved from group to group when we have tried group work. The collaborative learning model discourages this kind of teacher involvement. The belief is that the Instructor's presence is intrusive - it may heighten the activity of the group the Instructor is working with while the other groups "wait their turn," or it may even inhibit the groups from getting on with the task. The collaborative model suggests that the Instructor continue to manage the classroom without interfering in the actual work of the group. The Instructor should be the time keeper but should be minimally involved. If the Instructor takes a low profile, students tend to take more responsibility. The Instructor can keep groups focused on the task by interrupting occasionally to see how far students have progressed toward completion of the task.

The Instructor manages the logistics of the working groups, such as the seating arrangements of the groups. If there was home preparation for the group's task, and some students are unprepared, the Instructor needs to develop a strategy that solves the problem, as for example, having students do the homework during class and join the group when they finish. The Instructor observes from afar the dynamics of the group process and, if necessary, makes adjustments.

Following the small group work, the Instructor will reconvene the larger class and serve in the role of synthesizer. When the groups have reached consensus on the task assigned, each group recorder/reporter will share their group's ideas and insights with the larger class. At first, the Instructor simply listens to all the group reporters without interruption. The quality of the collaborative learning session rests largely on the Instructor's ability to help students synthesize each group's results with that produced by the other groups. The Instructor must help students to see the similarities, differences, and contradictions among the groups' perspectives. The Instructor may help students to reconcile the differences or to create a larger vision that incorporates the multiple perspectives of the groups. In this collaborative learning model, the Instructor goes beyond the synthesizer role in that he or she also must serve as a representative of the academic community. As representative of the academic community, the Instructor obviously brings his or her knowledge of content to the large group discussion.

Collaborative learning is a model that seems to help students to take more responsibility for their own learning and gets them more invested in each other's contributions. It is a model that promotes a more active learning style, gets students to think more critically because they will "own" their ideas, and supposedly, gets them to remember content far longer than when they simply listen to someone else's ideas in a lecture format.

Modified Focus Group Meeting

The Modified Focus Group, which incorporates what is known as the Nominal Group Process, is one type of collaborative learning strategy. I will describe it in detail here since this was the method I used in getting students and faculty to generate ideas about improving college instruction. It is a technique that can be adapted to a variety of teaching contexts.

The question I posed (what I have referred to above as defining the task) was: "What can Instructors and students do to improve the teaching/learning process on Mercer's campus?" After groups of four or five members have been set up, each member is asked to respond by writing a list of ideas that would address the question. Group recorder/reporters are then appointed or elected within each group.

The next step involves the recording of all the ideas within the group. This is done using a round-robin technique that assures that everyone's ideas will be aired and no one member of the group will dominate. Each member of the group offers one item from his or her list while the recorder writes down each idea on a master list that everyone can see. The recorder should write on a flip chart or newsprint in full view of the group members so that members can clarify if necessary. The round-robin process continues until all members have exhausted all items on their list. At this point, discussion is only for purposes of clarification.

Following the round-robin process, each group member records on an individual ballot his or her priority preferences of items appearing on the master list. Each item is ranked 1 to 5 with 1 being of little importance and 5 being of great importance. The group leader tabulates scores for each of the ranked items for the group's final ranking.

An alternative to this last step, which I use more frequently than the rank ordering and tabulation approach, is to get students to reach consensus by discussion. The group must generate a list of their top five items from the master list. I push students to reach consensus, explaining that consensus means agreement and not majority rule. However, I allow for minority reports if a group reaches a solid impasse.

The final step in the process is the reconvening of the large group. Each reporter outlines the ideas of his or her group for the class without discussion or interruption unless clarification is needed. The Instructor should emphasize that when one person has the floor, everyone needs to be quiet and attentive. Instructors can allow for other group members to add or clarify the group reporter's statement. After all groups have reported, the Instructor attempts to synthesize what has occurred by encouraging students to analyze and share their perceptions of similarities, differences, and contradictions. This is an opportunity for a larger perspective to be created, larger even than the sum of the groups' insights.

The ideas that I pulled together from the many groups I have run on our campus have been incorporated throughout this book. One interesting finding that supports what social psychologists discuss in the attribution theory research is that both faculty and students put the burden for

improving the teaching/learning process squarely on the shoulders of the other. In other words, faculty suggested numerous ways students could be better learners, that is, what could students do to learn and remember more effectively. And, not surprisingly, students suggested a whole host of ways that teachers could improve instruction, that is, what could faculty do to be more effective teachers. Obviously, one way to improve the teaching/learning process is for us to listen to each other, students and faculty, and for all of us to take more responsibility for our own parts of the process.

WRITING AND THINKING

Cognitive Psychologists discuss the intimate relationship between thinking and writing. Their research tells us that language and writing not only reflect thinking but also influence thinking as well. The relationship between thinking and writing is circular in that as our writing becomes clearer so does our thinking, and as our thinking becomes clearer so does our writing.

Vera Goodkin (1982, p. 1) argues that "writing acts as an intermediary in all facets of learning by means of a variety of operations to accommodate diverse learning styles...writing in content areas can help assimilate new material into a network of existing knowledge."

The results of Vera Goodkin's extensive research, research in which she used both faculty and students, and explored both personal and instructional uses of writing, are quite illuminating. She found that the range of the uses of writing for thinking and learning is even more expansive than the literature on this topic suggests. Faculty assigned writing tasks to help students to summarize, to paraphrase, to comment, to focus, think through, clarify, analyze, problem-solve, synthesize, speculate, infer and abstract. Students said they wrote in order to improve these intellectual skills. Further, students used writing to remember, review, outline, take notes, translate into their own language, understand, reflect, create word pictures, clarify, ask questions, organize thoughts and material, classify, differentiate, document, think analytically, interpret, integrate, synthesize, test themselves, and take examinations.

For both faculty and staff, Goodkin's research shows that writing forced thinking and intensified concentration. She found that writing can stimulate further thought, can sharpen the writer's powers of observation and awareness, and can be a tool for making connections. Her analysis of the data showed that writing represents a personal search for meaning.

The Harvard Assessment Seminars Report (1992) found that the relationship between the amount of writing for a course and the student's level of engagement with the course was stronger than any relationship they found between student engagement and any other course characteristic.

College faculty seem to be universally committed to teaching students to sharpen their critical thinking skills as well as teaching the content of their particular discipline. Writing is obviously a necessary skill in and of itself in navigating the world. Additionally, the uses of writing to think and to learn are so interwoven with the development of critical thinking skills that effective teaching must include writing components.

Those of us who are burdened with very large classes and heavy teaching loads (and that is most of us) may be reluctant to add writing components to our courses. However, there are tasks students can do which involve writing that are not necessarily grade producing. There are ways to get students to write more in and outside of class that will help improve their writing skills and their thinking skills that may not substantially increase our workloads but may enhance our effectiveness.

There are several rules of thumb for building some types of brief writing assignments into courses. Instructors need to identify and clarify the task for the student, making the task concrete and challenging. Add a persona or audience for the assigned task. Review cue words and define terms for students. Finally, produce in writing a clear, precise, concise statement of the task. In your written statement, you might want to use a cue word and then tell what it means. For example, "Analyze (examine the parts of)"..."Compare and contrast (give the similarities and differences)"..."Illustrate (give examples)"..."Paraphrase (state in your own words)"..."Explain (give reasons for; account for)"..."Describe (give details in visual words)"..."List (give a series of)"..."Identify (point out)"..."Define (state the meaning of)"...

Here is an example of a short written assignment that could be used for testing or for a paper in Introduction to Psychology that uses some rules of thumb described above:

Compare and contrast, that is, point out the similarities and differences, between classical and instrumental conditioning. In the first paragraph, state the general similarities and differences; the rest of your paper should deal with the specifics about each. Your paper should be four to five paragraphs. In your last paragraph, sum up the most important aspects of both types of conditioning. Keep your classmates in mind as your audience as you write. You may find it useful to first outline your answer by making two columns, one for classical conditioning and one for instrumental conditioning and listing important features of each. (If this is a paper students write at home, you could add: Your paper must be type written, double-spaced, and should not exceed two pages. After you write your first draft of your essay, read it aloud and rewrite as many drafts as you need. Hand in a carefully proofread essay. For help in editing, you can visit the Writing Center, second floor of the Library.)

The following suggestions come from a variety of sources, including Vera Goodkin's dissertation (1982) and her more recently published book, The Consequences of Writing (1987), suggestions from faculty from the Mercer Writing Across the Disciplines Committee, and the participants from the FIPSE Project:

1. Journals, already discussed in the section on pedagogy, should be mentioned here as well. Journals can be used in a great many disciplines and in a variety of ways. Keeping a journal can help students to learn more about themselves since journal writing encourages reflection and introspection. Journals can also be used for problem-solving and for helping students learn to articulate their points of view. When students share their journal entries with each other, interpersonal understanding can be achieved.

2. The Minute Paper, also mentioned in the section on pedagogy, can be used in a host of ways. Stopping a lecture or class discussion and asking students to write the most important points of the class can be an extremely valuable assessment tool. Are students getting the essential points of the class? Asking them to write any questions they still have concerning the content of the class can give the instructor a clear indication of what needs to be fine-tuned. The

minute paper serves not only to measure what students are getting from the class, but also helps students to articulate what they are in the process of assimilating. This helps them to learn the material and to assess what they do not yet understand.

3. Note-taking can serve a number of purposes. Students need to be encouraged to become effective note-takers since the recording of notes serves to keep them focused on the class, and the act of writing helps them to learn and retain the information. It may be helpful to spend a few minutes early in the semester teaching students how to take notes. On page 9 of "Succeeding at Mercer: A Brief Guide to Effective Study Skills," there is a list of tips for taking good class notes that you might go over in class. Students should be encouraged to up-date, outline, revise, reorganize, and put into their own language, their notes after class as part of the learning process. An in-class brief writing assignment that works well is to have students summarize in writing their own notes from the last class.

4. Reaction papers get students to first summarize factual information and then to make personal, evaluative comments. Students must thus go through a process whereby they first learn the "facts," then do some reasoning, and finally draw some evaluative conclusions. The writing of reaction papers can get students to sharpen their writing and critical thinking skills. You can have them write reaction papers to in-class films, to a distinguished lecture given on campus, or to their reading for the course.

5. During class, ask students to define a concept in writing and have them share their responses with the class.

6. Have students write their opinions on a controversial topic related to your course content and ask them to share their statements in dyads, small groups, or with the class.

7. Have students summarize in writing a class discussion toward the end of the class meeting. Use their summaries either to close the session or at the beginning of the next class.

8. Ask students to write a description of a process or system related to your course, starting with specifics and then moving towards generalizations.

9. Ask students to write down questions stimulated by the assigned readings.

10. Have students write about how a topic relates to their own experience.

11. Prior to class or at the beginning of a class, ask students to write their own interpretations of a concept and then have them write their revisions after class lecture/discussion.

12. Ask students to skim the chapters of their textbook at the beginning of a course and bring to class index cards with questions written from

each chapter. You may then read students' questions and discuss them with the whole class. Another approach would be to get students to work in brain-storming groups to generate questions for essay exams or for research projects.

ENCOURAGING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Our task as faculty is to teach students how to think, not what to think. Teaching students how to think means shifting the focus of learning from the possession of the "facts" of our discipline to the active application and problem-solving of the issues within our discipline. This shift enhances students' mastery of the subject matter; students are better able to retain and apply key concepts, principles, and theories. Encouraging students to think, that is, to interpret, to hypothesize, to evaluate, to discover, to analyze and synthesize, often generates student enthusiasm for classes and for the discipline. At the same time, the process keeps the fires burning for Instructors' vitality.

Many of the suggestions from the previous Writing and Thinking section certainly encourage the development and enhancement of critical thinking skills. There are additional points to be made here.

Getting students to think in class is often a challenge since the "traditional" teaching/learning model has been for teachers to give information (lecture) and for students to receive that information (listen). This promotes students to be rather passive learners, unless they are actively engaged with the lecture.

One means of getting students actively engaged with the material so as to promote critical thinking is by asking questions. Whether you are lecturing or conducting a class discussion, asking questions is a strategy to get students to think. Some types of questions are better than others for encouraging thinking. A "factual" question that has only one right answer promotes convergent thinking rather than the more creative divergent thinking. The factual question may be a lead in to get students down the path towards theorizing, but in and of itself does not usually generate much critical thinking. Questions of interpretation, open-ended questions, tend to be more productive. Questions with several possible answers work best in getting students to think.

Another element we must master, in addition to asking thought-producing questions, is learning to live with the silence our questions are often met with in class. Many of us struggle with silences and too often, too soon, jump in with answers and probes. We must learn to re-frame the silence. Rather than seeing the class silence as a vacuum that it is our responsibility to fill, we need to learn to see it as the opportunity we are providing for student thinking. In fact, we have to see the silence as our responsibility to provide in order for some genuine student thinking to take place. We have to become sensitive and effective listeners, comfortable with the silences that follow our stimulating questions.

These listening skills will facilitate another part of our role as thought stimulators. In order to foster critical thinking skills, we need to become expert summarizers of students' questions and comments. Rather than dazzle, or perhaps more accurately, overwhelm, students with all that we know, we need to use their questions, responses, and comments in class as springboards to inspire and encourage them. We do this by summarizing what they have said (sometimes even modifying or twisting what they have

said) to get them motivated to go further. We encourage them to work with the material in a more in-depth way, to hypothesize, to see multiple perspectives, and to draw more legitimate conclusions.

TEACHING A DIVERSE STUDENT BODY

MINORITIES

"No other organization, service or agency in Mercer County serves as many people in as many ways as does MCCC." (Keeping the Promise, 5/11/91). The College student population mirrors the diversity found in the county in terms of age, background, and interest. An analysis of MCCC's student population shows that 55% are female, 26% are minority, and the average age of our credit students is 29 years old.

By the year 2025, it is estimated that 40% of all 18 to 24-year-olds will be minority (Minority Achievement, June, 1989). As a nation, we are witnessing alarmingly low levels of college attendance, persistence, and completion among minority groups. The decline in minority enrollment and persistence of the last decade is continuing into the 1990's; this poses serious problems to the well being of our society. An educated minority population is necessary for the economic and social health of our region, our state, and our nation.

Research on minority enrollment depicts the last decade as one in which there has been disproportionately low enrollment and low persistence rates among African-American students. Although Mercer County Community College's minorities represent many different peoples, by far, the largest minority group consists of African-Americans. Obviously, faculty need to be concerned with all students, and with all minority students, but special attention will be given here to dealing with African-American students. I chose to focus on this minority population only partly because of their size on campus. It seems that many minority students, including international students, seem to fare better in our country and in our institution than native Americans of African heritage.

The National Assessment on Vocational Education (1989) states that about half of all African-Americans who attend college begin at the community college level. About half of these students leave the community college before completing their course of study. African-American students tend to earn 30% fewer credits than white students at two-year colleges, and they are 20% less likely to finish a program. Fewer than 10% actually finish a degree program.

The reasons for the college enrollment and persistence decline of African-Americans are myriad. The literature points out many problems that keep these minority students from higher education and that precipitate student withdrawals if they do begin higher education. Socioeconomic status obviously plays a role and influences academic preparation, aspirations and motivation, health, personal values, and self-concept. There are many other factors cited that seem to work against minority students such as: the lack of awareness of college services, unclear or unrealistic career and academic goals and expectations, unwillingness or inability to seek out and ask for help, lack of peer support, lack of understanding and empathy by the staff, alienation and loneliness, and lack of emotional/psychological support and encouragement from the college faculty.

At MCCC, the Minority Retention Task Force is attempting to meet many of the challenges presented above and thus increase minority student success. What I will present here will address the one problem cited nationally by African-American students in predominantly white institutions, that is, the lack of emotional/psychological support and encouragement from the college faculty. I believe we at MCCC are already a caring faculty, and we are often commended for that very quality. What I will be presenting here is intended to further our awareness and our sensitivity so that all our students will experience that sense of caring. (Source: Narrative for 1992-1993 Noncompeting Continuation Application, MCCC)

WHAT CAN FACULTY DO TO REDUCE PREJUDICE IN THE CLASSROOM?

Recent studies have shown that social climate influences whether people feel free to make ethnic and racial slurs. Beyond these findings, research suggests that people in authority such as corporate leaders, school principals, and teachers can play a crucial role in heading off bias statements and acts simply by making it known that such behavior will not be tolerated. Dr. Samuel Gaertner, a psychologist at the University of Delaware, says that the statement and tone set by the leader must be genuine for it to be effective; it will not work if it is a kind of hollow preaching. (Goleman, 1991)

In our classrooms, perhaps the first day of the course or at least very early in the term, we can make some statement about the College's commitment, and our endorsement of that commitment to celebrate the diversity of people in our institution. We each must find our own comfortable way of doing this; I find a positive statement of tolerance and celebration of differences sets a more inspiring tone than focusing on what behavior in class would be unacceptable.

Ann Mussey, in a talk presented at a New Jersey Project regional meeting held on the Douglas, New Brunswick campus, 4/24/91, outlined some steps that faculty could adopt as part of taking an anti-bias stance. She said that taking an anti-bias stance means adopting strategic and creative approaches to lessening prejudiced behaviors, attitudes, and institutional policies and practices in ourselves and in others. Mussey says that in our culture, with its deeply ingrained prejudices, we are probably never bias-free but rather in a process of becoming bias free if we make such a commitment. Mussey offered some steps to taking an anti-bias stance:

1. Let it be known that you, as a leader, do not condone biased attitudes, actions, or behaviors.

2. Understand that difference is an enrichment not a deficit.

3. Be able to be "comfortable" (even if you aren't at first) in a situation where you are the minority.

4. When you are in the majority, recognize that there are people in that group who feel unempowered.

5. Work at becoming inclusive of diverse groups; and when there is an absence of diversity, work at questioning that absence.

6. Adopt anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-heterosexist perspectives.

7. Avoid in your everyday life the use of racist, sexist, anti-gay, anti-lesbian epithets and speak out when others use them.

8. Avoid making assumptions about people on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, religion, physical ability, class, age.

9. Learn to use your power equitably, especially in situations where there are communication differences:

   1) Seek clarification (don't make assumptions);
   2) use open-ended language;
   3) be assertive, not aggressive.

10. Make a commitment to yourself to observe how bias operates in your day-to-day life.

11. Take all complaints of bias, harassment, abuse seriously and assist the person in finding appropriate resources for intervention, reconciliation, or redress.

In addition to setting a tone and creating a comfortable classroom atmosphere, we can use some techniques that have proven effective in prejudice reduction. Perhaps the single most successful strategy in reducing prejudice has been found to be putting people from different backgrounds together into small groups to work on a task collaboratively. This has worked in the corporate world and in the military. In schools, this has taken the form of learning teams. In 1989, a Florida study of 3200 students at five middle schools found that students in learning teams of black and white students were among the least prejudiced. Dr. Charles Green of Hope College, Michigan, cautions that the idea of putting people together and expecting them to just start liking each other is naive. He says that they must work together for common goals and this collaboration is what breaks down stereotypes and prejudice.

While the debate still rages among Americans about whether to emphasize similarities or emphasize differences among people in order to combat prejudice, the research clearly shows that understanding differences between groups of people will lessen resentments and prejudices. The more informed and sensitive we become to differences among people, the greater effect we will have as teachers in promoting harmony among our students.

I would like to present in its entirety a section from Roseanne Hoefel's article, "Confronting Exclusionary Ideologies in the Classroom: Transforming Toward Inclusion and Diversity" (Fall, 1991, pp. 45 - 46):

FACULTY BEHAVIORS REPORTED BY MINORITY STUDENTS WHICH MAY COMMUNICATE UNEASINESS AND DIFFERENTIAL EXPECTATIONS

1. Ignoring black students by avoiding eye contact, by not acknowledging comments, or by not calling on them directly.

2. Using a voice tone or facial expression that expresses disbelief or surprise when a black student responds correctly or makes an academic accomplishment.

3. Interrupting black students more when they do respond and not helping them to probe further with their responses.

4. Making comments which imply that blacks are not as competent as whites or presume that blacks cannot be in charge.

5. Asking a black student for an opinion on an issue related to race as if the black person is a spokesperson for all blacks.

6. Offering little guidance and criticism of the work black students produce.

7. Ignoring the cultural contributions of blacks and using examples in such a way as to reinforce a stereotyped and negative view of blacks.

8. Reacting to comments or questions articulated in a black language style as if they are inherently of less value.

EFFECTS OF THESE BEHAVIORS

1. Discourage classroom participation.

2. Discourage students from seeking help outside of class.

3. Lead students to drop or avoid certain classes and to switch majors.

4. Make students feel less confident.

5. Inhibit the development of relationships with faculty that can be helpful in learning about a particular discipline and related career paths.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT IS MORE CONDUCIVE TO THE PARTICIPATION OF BLACK STUDENTS

1. During the first few weeks of class, become aware of how you and black and white students interact with one another. Make sure relevant questions, comments or opinions of black students are acknowledged by you and other students.

2. Encourage black students who are reluctant to participate.

3. Try to solicit and listen to the opinions expressed by a black student as those of an individual rather than those of a group spokesperson.

4. Make sure that black students are not unnecessarily being interrupted or discredited by you or other students in the class.

5. Make good eye contact with black students.

6. Make sure that black students are assuming responsibility in group activities and are allowed to take on leadership roles.

7. Be careful not to call a black student using the name of another black student in the class or group. Black students are likely to interpret this action as regarding them as part of a group rather than an individual.

8. Notice whether the language style of a black student's comment, question, or response affects your own perception of its importance.

9. Meet with black students to discuss academic and career goals. Offer to write reference letters when appropriate.

10. Include black students in the informal interactions that can be important in communicating support and acceptance.

11. Become aware of contributions by blacks in your area and use examples when appropriate. The implications of certain theoretical perspectives for blacks may also be pertinent in certain disciplines.

12. Provide blacks with informal as well as formal feedback or constructive critique on the quality of their work. Watch for comments that may imply they are not as competent as white students or that attribute their success to chance and their failure to lack of ability.

TEACHING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

As an Institution and as a faculty, we are committed to providing all students who seek an education a top-notch educational experience. Some students are in need of what is termed, "reasonable accommodations." Providing students with special accommodations involves the entire institution. This handbook will focus only on faculty responsibility. Our task as faculty involves becoming more aware and more sensitive to students with special needs. This awareness begins with listening to students who may often teach us what we need to know. From the publication, "Reasonable Accommodations: A Faculty Guide to Teaching College Students With Disabilities" ...

> The student's own suggestions, based on experience with the disability, and with school work, are invaluable in accommodating disabilities in college.

June Evans, MCCC's disability counselor, suggests several ways to help students with certain disabilities:

1. faculty should include a statement on the course syllabus such as, "If there is any student who feels that he or she may need an accommodation for any type of disability, please make an appointment to see me during my office hours to discuss this."

2. Do not call attention to the student's disability in front of the class.

3. Provide an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality.

4. Talk to your students and help them think through how they can apply their strengths to your course.

5. Cooperate with students who need to use accommodations such as: taped texts, use of tape recorder in lecture, untimed tests, tests in quiet location, oral, dictated, or taped presentation of tests and assignments, reader, scribe, opportunity to type in-class papers, tape-recorded hand-outs, use of calculator or dictionary, oral, dictated, taped or typed test or assignment responses.

TIPS FOR TEACHING STUDENTS WHO ARE HEARING IMPAIRED:

(from Smith, L.M., The College Student With a Disability: A faculty Handbook, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981, p.9)

1. Look at the person when you speak.

2. Don't smoke, chew gum, or otherwise block the area around your mouth with your hands or other objects.

3. Speak naturally and clearly. Don't exaggerate lip movements or volume.

4. Try to avoid standing in front of windows or other sources of light. The glare from behind you makes it difficult to read lips and other facial expressions.

5. Using facial expressions, gestures, and other "body language" is helpful in conveying your message.

6. If you are talking through the assistance of an interpreter, direct your conversation to the deaf individual. This is more courteous and allows the person the option of viewing both you and the interpreter to more fully follow the flow of conversation.

7. When other people speak who may be out of the person's range of vision, repeat the question or comment and indicate who is speaking (by motioning) so the individual can follow the discussion.

8. The use of visual media may be helpful to students with hearing impairments since slides and videotaped materials supplement and reinforce what is being said. Alteration in lighting may interfere with the student's capacity to read manual or oral communication. These materials may be difficult to interpret because of sound quality and speed of delivery. Therefore interpreter "lag" may be greater. If a written script is available, provide the interpreter and student with a copy in advance.

9. Captioned visual aids such as "Captioned Films for the Deaf" are extremely helpful. If appropriate, foreign language films with English subtitles are also useful.

10. When new materials will be covered which involve technical terminology not in common usage, if possible, supply a list of these words or terms in advance to the student. Unfamiliar words are difficult to speech read or interpret.

11. Avoid speaking with your back to the student such as when you are writing on the chalkboard. Overhead projectors are often a good substitute and allow you to face the class while writing.

12. When particularly important information is being covered, be sure to convey it very clearly. Notices of class cancellations, assignments,

etc. can be put in writing or on a chalk board to ensure understanding.

13. Establish a system for getting messages to the student when necessary. Class cancellations can be particularly costly if an interpreter is not informed in advance of such changes.

TIPS FOR TEACHING STUDENTS WHO ARE VISUALLY IMPAIRED: THE BLIND AND THE PARTIALLY SIGHTED: (Smith, 1981)

1. When there is a student with visual impairments present in your class, do not exclusively use visual examples and images.

2. When you use the chalkboard or overhead projector, be as descriptive as possible. Say in words what is written.

3. Avoid phrases that assume all your students can "see" what you mean, as for example, "here, there, this, that." Say in words what you mean. This is particularly important when you are using the chalkboard and might tend to assume that pointing and saying "here or there" or "this or that" would be sufficient.

4. Early in the course, consult the student so that you may agree on how the student will be evaluated. Many students will prefer to take examinations with a familiar reader who also writes their answers in order to reduce their test anxiety. Blind students may also record their answers for you on a cassette tape or they may type.

5. If classes involve field trips, discuss travelling needs with your student.

6. Do not assume that courses that are extremely visual by nature need to be waived for blind students. There may be creative ways that visually impaired students can learn essentially visual material.

7. When handing out materials in class, if the blind student is sitting in the first seat of the row, you may want to say their name and give them the hand-out, and then pass that row's papers behind this first student. If the student is not in the first seat, make sure other students give him or her the hand-out in a courteous way.

8. If you have a student who is partially sighted in your class, discuss their special needs early in the course. The student may do well to sit in the front of the room. You may be asked to write in extra large print on the chalkboard or the overhead projector. Ask the student what has worked best in their past experience.

TIPS FOR TEACHING STUDENTS WHO USE WHEELCHAIRS:

It is difficult to make generalizations concerning the needs of students who use wheelchairs since there is such a wide range of differences among these students. Some students may be able to stand for short periods of time while others are not able to stand or walk at all. Some students may have full use and range of their arms and hands while others may have little or no use of them. There are, however, some tips that will apply to most students who use wheelchairs:

(from Smith, 1981, p.10)

1. If a classroom or faculty office is inaccessible, it will be necessary to find an acoessible location.

2. Be compassionate and flexible for late-comers to class (students in wheelchairs and on crutches) because it is not necessarily in the student's capability to arrive on time due to scheduling of classes, building barriers, and sometimes, dependency on others.

3. If the class involves field work or field trips, discuss with the student the selection of sites and modes of transportation.

4. Modify courses in physical education so that students in wheelchairs can participate in some way. Information on adaptive physical education programming is available from the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation for the Handicapped, Information and Research Utilization Center.

5 Classes taught in laboratory settings usually require some modification of the work setting.

6. Most students who use wheelchairs will ask for assistance if they need it. Don't assume automatically that assistance is required. Offer assistance, particularly with opening doors, but do not insist, and accept a "no, thank you" graciously.

7 When having a conversation with a student in a wheelchair, if possible and convenient, sit or squat so that you are at eye level with him or her.

8. Do not lean or hang onto the wheelchair unless you have a personal relationship with the student. The wheelchair is part of the student's personal space.

TIPS FOR TEACHING STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES:

A learning disability, often referred to as LD, is any of a diverse group of conditions that causes difficulties in perception. A learning disability is a permanent disorder that affects the way in which a student with average or above average intelligence takes in, processes, retains, or expresses information. These difficulties can be in the auditory, visual, or spatial domains. Students with difficulties in writing have what is known as "dysgraphia," and students with difficulties in mathematics have "dyscalculia." The difficulties can vary widely within each category. For example, a person who is "dyslexic" has difficulty in reading, but the range of difficulty varies tremendously.

There are other conditions, such as "Attention Deficit Disorder," (difficulties in concentration) and "Developmental Aphasia," (a disorder or language functions) that would come under the general category of learning disabilities as well. The term, "learning disabilities" covers a wide range of conditions, and within any specific condition, there may be multiple manifestations. The term is non-explanatory since we do not know specifically what causes these conditions, although we do know that the difficulties have much to do with how the brain processes information. We also know that the difficulties associated with learning disabilities can be compensated for even though there isn't a "cure" for the condition.

One of the many myths of this somewhat "hidden" disorder is that learning disabled students are intellectually deficient. College students with learning disorders have at least average intelligence and many have above average or superior intelligence. In fact, one of the major characteristics of students with learning disabilities is the discrepancy between their intellectual potential and their school achievements.

Learning disabilities usually manifest themselves early in a child's school career. The earlier the diagnosis, the better since early interventions can help students learn to compensate for their difficulties. Those students arriving at college knowing about their disability are better able to navigate the college experience. Some students may not recognize or understand their disorder until they reach college.

A lengthy evaluation is needed to assess whether a student has a learning disability, and what the nature and severity of the condition is. There are a variety of patterns evidenced by such an evaluation that would indicate the presence of a learning disability. There are two commonalities for all the patterns. Learning disabled students seem to have adequate or above average intellectual capacity as measured by an I.Q. test. Secondly, they seem to have significant disparities in school-related intellectual performance. If you have students who seem to fit the pattern, you can speak to them privately in your office. Those who have already been diagnosed may give you invaluable clues as to the types of adaptation that work for them. Students who seem to fit the pattern but who have not been diagnosed need to be referred to our campus specialist, June Evans (SC 229, ext. 375) Of course, all this needs to be handled with compassion and sensitivity.

June Evans has compiled the following teaching strategies that are useful for all students but may be essential for the academic success of learning disabled students:

1. Give assignment and test dates well in advance. Ideally, a detailed syllabus and list of required readings would be available prior to the start of the semester so the student can prepare for the class.

2. Directions and assignments should be given in both written and oral forms.

3. Limit the number of math problems on a page. Allow plenty of room to do work.

4. Make sure students know what will be covered before class so they can preview.

5. At the beginning of each class review the major points from the last class and let students know what will be happening this class. Summarize the main points of the day at the end of each class.

6. Relate material to students' lives to facilitate associative learning.

7. Diagram or map relationships between concepts as well as describe when possible.

8. Be aware of differences in learning styles. Provide multisensory input (write, say, do) whenever possible.

9. Encourage active participation (doing, writing, activities, experiments, role-playing).

10. Give clear clues to aid the identification of important points (through statements and gestures).

11. Give study guide/outlines of major points. (Students can fill in supporting information.)

12. Share mnemonic devices and associations with students.

13. Give direct, uncomplicated directions; avoid double negatives.

14. Write key terms on the board in a neat and orderly way; do not overload blackboard.

15. If your handwriting is difficult to read, give typed handouts or use typed transparencies.

16. For students with comprehension problems consider recommending an alternate text at the student's reading comprehension level.

17. Help students analyze errors.

18. Maintain good eye contact.

19. Spell out pertinent study skills for your course.

20. When you meet with your advisees, ask if they have any special needs or problems. Many students with learning disabilities need to take a reduced course load that is carefully balanced. (If they have reading difficulties, they should not take several "heavy-reading" courses.)

June Evans also compiled the following additional list of suggestions for teaching students with specific learning difficulties:

TEACHING STRATEGIES TO HELP THE LEARNING DISABLED STUDENT

A. Organization Skills and Study Habits

1. Provide a course outline which includes required assignments, your method of instruction (e.g. lecture, film, discussion, oral presentation) and your method of evaluation.

2. Explain the purpose and objectives of each assignment carefully.

3. Provide a time line for students who are asked to complete long term assignments. (For example, if a term paper is assigned, set specific checkpoints for completion of specific phases, e.g. note cards, outline, etc.)

4. Schedule individual conferences to provide feedback and structure for students.

B. Auditory Processing

1. Reduce the amount of speed of oral material when speaking to the student.

2. Write as many key words and phrases as possible on the chalkboard. (Remember that the less familiar the student is with the vocabulary and the subject, the greater the difficulty appears to be at the level of phonemic discrimination.)

3. Listening comprehension and/or short term memory problems may be related to difficulty with note-taking. Therefore, it may be helpful to allow students to

   a. Tape lectures
   b. Use a note-taker
   c. Tape record hand-outs and other written assignments
   d. Use taped texts

   (All these services are available or arranged through the Disability Counselor)

C. Visual and Visual-Motor-Graphic Problems (Perceptual Problems)

1. Allow students with visual-motor-graphic problems to tape lectures.

2. Minimize writing assignments for students with visual-motor-graphic problems. Typing can be substituted for handwriting.

3. Make handouts clear and uncluttered for students with visual discrimination and/or figure-ground problems.

4. Provide extra time for copying assignments, taking notes, and completing in-class writing assignments.

D. Reading Disabilities

1. For students with diagnosed disabilities, it may be helpful to obtain tapes of the required textual readings.

2. Provide alternate readings or texts at appropriate reading level which cover the same subject matter.

3. Remember: there are many students with high decoding skills who have comprehension problems. Alternate texts at the student's comprehension level are recommended.

4. Allow for options for those learning disabled students who have difficulty with oral readings. For example, allow students to prepare ahead of time or allow students to read privately to the instructor.

5. Allow extra time to complete reading assignments.

6. Allow students to use special supports such as large print magnifiers and place markers if appropriate.

E. Writing Disabilities

1. Allow for other methods of presentation for those learning disabled students with difficulty in using correct grammar and syntax. For example, an oral or slide presentation might be used to show understanding of subject matter.

F. Math

1. Limit the number of problems on a page for students with visual discrimination and/or figure ground problems.

2. Suggest graph paper (centimeter) for students who have difficulty keeping columns straight.

3. Check to see if reversals (6,9) account for pattern of student errors.

4. Allow students with memory problems to use calculators. (Testing for those students may need to be done individually.)

5. Remember: there are those students who can do rote math problems but who have difficulty with math concepts (time, measurement, spatial relations) and vice- versa.

G. Social - Personal

1. Provide an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality in working with learning disabled students. Many of these people have failed repeatedly and are sensitive and self-conscious.

2. Emphasize and incorporate students' strengths.

H. Evaluation Procedures

1. Allow for alternate methods of demonstrating mastery of course objectives.

2. For those with long term memory problems, shorter grading periods and more frequent evaluations are helpful.

3. Use untimed tests to reduce anxiety.

4. Use a reader for students taking objective examinations.

5. Use a writer for students taking essay examinations.

6. Offer essay examinations as an alternative for students who have difficulty reading or writing on objective examinations.

7. Allow students to take tests in a separate room with a proctor.

8. Allow for oral, taped or typed instead of written examinations.

9. Allow students to clarify questions or rephrase them in their own words before answering examination questions.

10. Allow students to use a calculator or dictionary if necessary.

11. Avoid complex sentence structure in questions.

Remember: Make your course evaluation contingent upon the acquisition of the course content and not on the student's disability.

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